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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the writing process and young children, suggesting prewriting activities and discussing writing, revising, and publishing in the classroom. The paper also enumerates what children like, such as interesting topics, self-selection, listening to stories, reading their writing to peers or younger children, and special formats for final copy. The paper provides two lesson plans: Using KWL for Writing a Report, and Using Oral Telling of Stories to Prepare for Writing a Story. Each lesson plan states lesson goal; cites materials needed; suggests a step-by-step procedure for classroom implementation; notes time required for completion; and discusses evaluation. (NKA)

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Building Better Writing Through Understanding Text: A Connection for Success

For Classroom and Reading Teachers grades 2-4

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The Writing Process

Where does understanding text fit?

Prewriting

Reading and listening to narrative text

Making up stories orally

How do story components tell a lively, coherent story?

Reading and listening to expository text

What makes the facts interesting?

What beginnings and endings work to keep reader interest?

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Writing

Making comparisons with narrative and expository text

Keeping motivation high

Revising

Self- and peer evaluation

Teacher assistance

Publishing

Making a final copy of selected writing

Sharing with varied audiences

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What Children Like

interesting topics

self-selection

related to daily experience

related to fantasy they enjoy

listening to stories

reading their writing to peers or younger children

AlphaSmarts or other word processors

special formats for final copy

owning their own notebook

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Where to find more information

Copies of the lesson plans will be available online at www.reading.org/orlando/ after the conference.

Send questions or comments to Lludy@dcds.edu

Ogle, D. M. "The know, want to know, learn strategy," In K. D. Muth (Ed.), Children's comprehension of text (pp. 205-223).

Books about children's writing by authors such as Donald Graves (Writing: Teachers and Children at Work), Lucy Calkins (The Art of Teaching Writing), and Regie Routman (Invitations OR Transitions).

Articles in professional journals such as The Reading Teacher, Language Arts, and Instructor.

Teacher Editions of reading series such as the Macmillian McGraw-Hill Reading Series that is used at our school.

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LESSON PLANS

Using KWL for Writing a Report

This lesson was used for 2nd graders in January. It could be used well with older students. Children receive specific guidance throughout the writing process. They need to be able to work independently, asking for help as needed. Each child has a different topic. Children should have read and/or listened to information articles and should know how these are different from narrative text before writing a report such as this.

Lesson Goal to organize and learn information about a topic and write and revise a report

Materials one easy reading information book about animals for each child, drawing and writing paper for preparing the report, construction and drawing paper for displaying the report

Procedures

1. Show children a list of animals for which you have enough books for one per child. Each child selects or is assigned an animal.

2. Children write the name of their animal at the top of a sheet of drawing paper and divide the paper into 3 columns.

3. Children write 3 things they KNOW about the animal.

4. Children write 3 questions (things they WANT TO LEARN) about the animal.

5. Children read their book and list 3 or more things they learn about their animal, answering their questions if possible.

6. Children review the KWL information and then write a report about their animal. Children should be told about how long to make their reports.

7. Children receive help from the teacher in revising. They should read the report to at least one peer and receive suggestions, compliments, and questions.

8. Children recopy and illustrate the report.

9. Children display reports on the bulletin board.

<u>Time required</u> for this lesson varies with the independence of students. For 2nd graders it can easily take one day for Prewriting and KWL (1, 2, 3, 4), one day for reading the book and completing the KWL chart (5), one day for writing the report (6), one day for revising (7), and one day for preparing the final copy for display (8, 9). Typically, 2nd graders find it difficult to focus on a writing task for more than 30 minutes but can sustain interest over several days. They enjoy hearing about each other's writing in process.

<u>Evaluation</u> Self-evaluation, teacher comments, use of a writing rubric are preferable to letter grades for young writers. Rubrics should be simple and include only a small number of things to be evaluated if they are shown to children.

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Using Oral Telling of Stories to Prepare for Writing a Story

This lesson was used for 2nd graders in January. It could be used well with older and many younger students. Children receive specific guidance throughout the writing process. They may be able to work independently, asking for help as needed. Each child selects characters and ideas for a story. Children should have read and/or listened to narrative stories and discussed the components of a story.

Lesson Goal to create and tell a story, then select ideas for your own story and write and revise it

Materials drawing and writing paper for preparing the report, construction and drawing paper for displaying the report

Procedures

1. Begin with discussion of a favorite story. Who are the characters? What is the setting? What problems do the characters have? How do they solve these?

2. Children tell a group story. Each child contributes one or two sentences, and the story is complete when all have had a turn. The teacher provides commentary as the story unfolds, eg, "Now we have a main character. Where did the story take place?" "Ah, a problem. I wonder how they'll solve that." "We must be near the end of the story now. Do we need anything special for the ending?"

3. At the end of the group story children discuss the characters, setting, problem, solution, sequence of events, or other story components. Keep this discussion simple if children have little practice with writing stories.

4. Each child has a turn to name a character and a setting for the story he/she will write. The teacher makes a few suggestions or encouraging comments about each, especially emphasizing how eager we all are to read the story after it is written.

5. Children write their stories, asking for help as needed.

6. Children receive help from the teacher in revising. They should read the report to at least one peer and receive suggestions, compliments, and questions.

7. Children recopy and illustrate the story.

8. Children share stories first with each other and then with kindergartners.

Time required for this lesson varies with the independence of students. For 2nd graders it can easily take one day for telling the oral story (1, 2, 3), one day for selecting and discussing characters and settings for stories (4), one day for writing the story (5), one day for revising (6), and one day for preparing the final copy for display (7), and one day for sharing (8). Typically, 2nd graders find it difficult to focus on a writing task for more than 30 minutes but can sustain interest over several days. They enjoy hearing about each other's writing in process. For this story activity a strong motivator was the promise of sharing the finished stories with kindergartners.

<u>Evaluation</u> Self-evaluation, teacher comments, use of a writing rubric are preferable to letter grades for young writers. Rubrics should be simple and include only a small number of things to be evaluated if they are shown to children.

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